

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ACDA-19 SAJ-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EB-11

COME-00 MC-02 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11 L-03 NSAE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9439

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L COPENHAGEN 2170

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, BEXP, DA, FR

SUBJECT: REPLACEMENT FIGHTER PLANE

REF: COPENHAGEN 2117

BEGIN SUMMARY: DURING HIS VISIT HERE FRENCH
PREMIER CHIRAC STRONGLY URGED DANES TO BUY
FRENCH FIGHTER PLANE. HE WAS TOLD THAT THE
DANISH GOVT. WAS NOT GOING TO TAKE ANY POSITION
ON A REPLACEMENT FIGHTER AT THE PRESENT TIME.
SENIOR MFA OFFICIAL ADMITTED THAT DELAYING A
DECISION MAY BE DIFFICULT, BUT SAID THAT PRE-
SENT DANISH FOUR-PARTY DEFENSE COMPROMISE MILITATED
AGAINST AN EARLY CHOICE. KEY DANISH MINISTERS
ARE NOW SEIZED WITH THIS PROBLEM. END SUMMARY.

1. IN BRIEFING THE DCM AUGUST 9 ON THE RECENT
VISITS OF FRENCH PREMIER CHIRAC AND GERMAN CHAN-
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CELLOR SCHMIDT, MFA PERMANENT UNDER SECRETARY

EIGIL JORGENSEN BEGAN WITH SUBJECT OF THE REPLACEMENT FIGHTER (OTHER SUBJECTS COVERED IN SEPTTEL) WHICH HE SAID CHIRAC HAD RAISED IN HIS PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH PRIMIN HARTLING AS WELL AS IN OTHER TALKS HERE. IN RESPONSE TO HIS REQUEST THAT THE DANES PURCHASE THE FRENCH FIGHTER, HE WAS TOLD THAT THE DANISH GOVT. DID NOT INTEND TO TAKE ANY POSITION AT THE PRESENT TIME. JORGENSEN EXPLAINED THAT THE BASIC REASON WAS POLITICAL, RECALLING THE FOUR-PARTY AGREEMENT WHICH GOVERNS DANISH DEFENSE IN THE PERIOD 1973-77. HE SAID THAT THE PRESENT ONE-PARTY MINORITY GOVT. COULD NOT TAKE ANY MAJOR DEFENSE DECISIONS WITHOUT GETTING THE AGREEMENT OF ITS THREE OTHER PARTNERS IN THE AGREEMENT AND HE THOUGHT THE GOVT. WOULD BE VERY RELUCTANT TO EXPEND POLITICAL CAPITAL IN TRYING TO DO THIS. HE ADMITTED THAT IT MIGHT BE UNREALISTIC FOR DENMARK, WHICH HAD LINKED ITS PLANE PURCHASE WITH THREE PARTNERS, TO REFRAIN FROM MAKING A DECISION IF THE OTHERS DID. THE FRENCH HAD INDEED POINTED THIS OUT, SAYING THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO GET INTO PRODUCTION WITHOUT KNOWING HOW MANY PLANES WILL BE ORDERED. JORGENSEN SAID THE DANES WERE PARTICIPATING IN THE FOUR-POWER GROUP BASICALLY FOR "ANALYSIS" PURPOSES, BUT HE CONCEDED THAT WAITING WITH THE DECISION WOULD ALSO MEAN THEY WOULD PROBABLY PAY MORE FOR THE AIRCRAFT AND WOULD RECEIVE NO OFFSET. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE DANES FULLY REALIZE THAT THE DEFENSE COMPROMISE HAD BEEN SET AT TOO LOW A LEVEL AND THAT THEY WERE NOT DOING WHAT THEY SHOULD IN NATO. ON THE OTHER HAND HE POINTED OUT THAT EVEN DURING THE CURRENT FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES THERE HAD BEEN NO DEMAND TO CUT THE AGREED DEFENSE BUDGET.

2. DCM EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR JORGENSEN'S FILL-IN ON THIS ISSUE, ADDING THAT THE AMBASSADOR HOPED TO RAISE IT WITH THE PRIME MINISTER, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE DEFENSE MINISTER IN THE NEAR FUTURE. JORGENSEN REPLIED THAT HE THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE GOOD BECAUSE ALL THREE OF THESE MINISTERS WERE NOW AWARE OF THE PROBLEM. ON THE POLITICAL LEVEL THEY SEE IT IN THE FOLLOWING TERMS: NATO MILITARY COOPERATION ARGUES FOR A U.S. FIGHTER, BUT FROM A EUROPEAN-PROJECT POINT OF VIEW IT MIGHT BE BETTER TO

BUY FRENCH. HE INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT WITH THE LIMITED FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN NATO DEFENSE AND WITH THEIR NON-PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROGROUP, HE DID NOT FIND THE "EUROPEAN" ARGUMENT PARTICULARLY CONVINCING. HE ALSO NOTED THAT IT WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT THE DANISH AIR FORCE MUCH PREFERRED ONE OF THE TWO AMERICAN CONTENDERS.

3. COMMENT: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THE FIGHTER PLANE ISSUE HAS BEEN RAISED BY THE DANES WITH US ON A POLITICAL LEVEL. THE DEFENSE AGREEMENT ARGUMENT IS A REAL ONE BUT NOT NECESSARILY INSUPERABLE. IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR TO US THAT A DECISION THIS YEAR ON A NEW FIGHTER PLANE WOULD MEAN PRYING OPEN THE ENTIRE DEFENSE AGREEMENT, ALTHOUGH THE DANES SEEM TO BE SAYING THIS. WHILE THEY MAY HAVE THOUGHT IT PRUDENT TO TELL CHIRAC THAT THEY WERE NOT GOING TO MAKE A DECISION NOW, WE THINK THAT ON CLOSER EXAMINATION THEY WILL FIND THE FINANCIAL SAVINGS ARGUMENT PERSUASIVE ENOUGH TO MAKE THEM WANT TO GO ALONG-- IF THE OTHER THREE CAN AGREE ON A CHOICE. THIS MAKES THE QUESTION OF OFFSET PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT AND WE COULD USE ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WE COULD BE GIVEN ON THAT SUBJECT. THE AMBASSADOR AND OTHER EMBASSY OFFICERS WILL TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY TO IMPRESS UPON THE DANES AT THE DECISION-MAKING LEVEL THE ADVANTAGE OF CHOOSING AN AMERICAN AIRCRAFT.
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